

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 4140

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, NU

SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL POWER STRUGGLE WITHIN THE CONSERVATIVE
PARTY (PCN-P)

1. AT LUNCH ON AUGUST 30, 1976, WITH THE MAYOR OF GRANADA, LIC.
ALVARO CHAMORRO MORA, THE INTENSIFICATION OF THE INTERNAL POWER
STRUGGLE FOR THE PRESIDENCY OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY (PCN-P) WAS
DISCUSSED AT SOME LENGTH.

2. CHAMORRO TOLD ME THAT THE CURRENT PRESIDENT; EDUMNDO PAGUAGA,
WANTS TO BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN A POSITION OF INFLUENCE WITHIN THE
GOVERNING BODY OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY AFTER THE ELECTION OF
NEW PARTY LEADERS IN JANUARY, 1977. PAGUAGA FAVORS A "CAMOUFLAGED
CONTINUITY" OF THE PRESENT LEADERSHIP GROUP, AND HOPES TO HAVE NEW
PARTY STATUTES ADOPTED THAT INCLUDE A COLLEGIAL, ROTATING PRES-
IDENCY OF FIVE PERSONS, EACH TO SERVE ONE YEAR, OR SOME VARIA-
TION THEREOF.

3. ACCORDING TO CHAMORRO, THE PRESENT PARTY LEADERS (ESPECIALLY
PAGUAGA) SUFFER FROM AN IMAGE OF "COLLABORATIONISTS" AND DEPEND-
ENCE ON SOMOZA, THEREBY DISCREDITING THEMSELVES AND THE PARTY
IN THE EYES OF POTENTIAL SUPPORTERS. HE BELIEVES THAT ONLY A COM-
PLETE RENOVATION OF THE PARTY LEADERSHIP, NATURALLY WITH YOUNGER
AND POPULIST-ORIENTED LEADERS LIKE HIMSELF TO THE FOREFRONT, CAN
PREVENT THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY FROM FALLING INTO COMPLETE DISCREDIT
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AND IMPOTENCE AT THE NEXT PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN 1981. HE

CLAIMED THAT HE WAS THE ONLY CONSERVATIVE PARTY POLITICAL LEADER WITH AN AUTHENTIC, HARD-WON POLITICAL BASE, DUE TO HIS POPULAR ELECTION AS THE MAYOR OF GRANADA IN 1974. CHAMORRO ASSERTED THAT HE HAD A POPULAR FOLLOWING IN THE CITY AND PROVINCE OF GRANADA, AND HAD ACQUIRED A REPUTATION AS AN HONEST, DYNAMIC MAYOR.

4. ALTHOUGH A FRIEND AND RELATIVE OF ALBERTO CHAMORRO BERNARD, WHO ANNOUNCED HIS CANDIDACY FOR THE PARTY'S NOMINATION IN JULY, THE MAYOR FEARED THAT ALBERTO CHAMORRO WAS AN INDECISIVE AND VACILLATING CANDIDATE (WITH NO VOCATION FOR PARTY LEADERSHIP) WHO MIGHT WITHDRAW HIS NAME AT THE LAST MINUTE AND ALLOW PAGUAGA TO APPOINT SOME UNKNOWN AND NON-CONTROVERSIAL PARTY HACK, THEREBY EFFECTIVELY WEAKENING THE PARTY STILL FURTHER.

5. AS CHAMORRO SEES IT, THE NEXT THREE YEARS ARE DECISIVE ONES FOR THE FUTURE OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY. THE PARTY LEADERSHIP MUST BE IN THE HANDS OF SOMEONE LIKE HIMSELF CAPABLE OF REVITALIZING THE PARTY AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL, AND MOBILIZING GRASS ROOTS SUPPORT, BASED ON AN UNEQUIVOCAL "ANTI-PACTISM" AND ANTI-SOMOZA POSITION.

6. HE DISCOUNTED THE ABILITY OF EDUARDO CHAMORRO OR FERNANDO ZELAYA, TWO OTHER CONSERVATIVE LEADERS INTERESTED IN THE PRESIDENCY, TO UNDERTAKE SWEEPING PARTY REORGANIZATION AND MASS MOBILIZATION THAT WAS NEEDED TO TRANSFORM THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY INTO A RESPECTED POLITICAL FORCE, EDUARDO CHAMORRO WAS TOO ALOOF, TOO ABSTRACT AND PHILOSOPHICAL, AND WAS UNACCEPTABLE TO PAGUAGA, WHO STILL MAINTAINED FIRM CONTROL OF AN IMPORTANT SEGMENT OF THE PARTY VOTES FOR THE PRESIDENCY. AND FERNANDO ZELAYA'S TOO CLOSE RELATIONSHIP TO THE LIBERAL PARTY (PARTICULARLY CORNELIO HUECK), COMBINED WITH A REPUTATION FOR HIS CLEVERNESS AND DEVIOUSNESS DID NOT INSPIRE CONFIDENCE IN THE PARTY OR AMONGST THE MASSES.

7. THE MAYOR CONFIDED THAT HE INTENDS TO LAUNCH AN ASSAULT ON PAGUAGA'S DIRECTION OF THE PARTY AND IS TRYING TO OBTAIN SUFFICIENT SUPPORT TO GAIN THE PRESIDENCY. HE STATED THAT HE INTENDED TO ANNOUNCE HIS CANDIDACY FOR PRESIDENT IN SEPTEMBER.

8. COMMENT: MAYOR CHAMORRO MAY BE THE ONLY FULL-TIME POLITICAL FIGURE IN THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY. AT SOME FINANCIAL SACRIFICE, HE

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HAS DEDICATED THE PAST THREE YEARS TO CONSERVATIVE POLITICS, WINNING THE MAYORALTY ELECTION IN 1974, AND ACQUIRING A CONSIDERABLE POPULAR FOLLOWING IN GRANADA. HE IS PROBABLY STILL TOO YOUNG (36 YEARS OLD) TO BE CONSIDERED SERIOUSLY TO LEAD THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY AS ITS PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE IN THE NEXT ELECTION. NEVERTHELESS, BASED ON POLITICAL FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH. HE CLEARLY WANTS TO CAPTURE THE PARTY LEADERSHIP IN ORDER TO UNDERTAKE A COMPLETE REORGANIZATION OF THE PARTY AND A BROADENING OF ITS POPULAR

APPEAL. HOWEVER, IT IS PROBLEMATIC THAT HE WILL BE ABLE TO DO
SO AGAINST PAGUAGA, AND WITHOUT THE FINANCIAL AND POLITICAL SUP-
PORT OF ALBERTO CHAMORRO AND HIS WEALTHY GRANADA CAMARILLA.
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